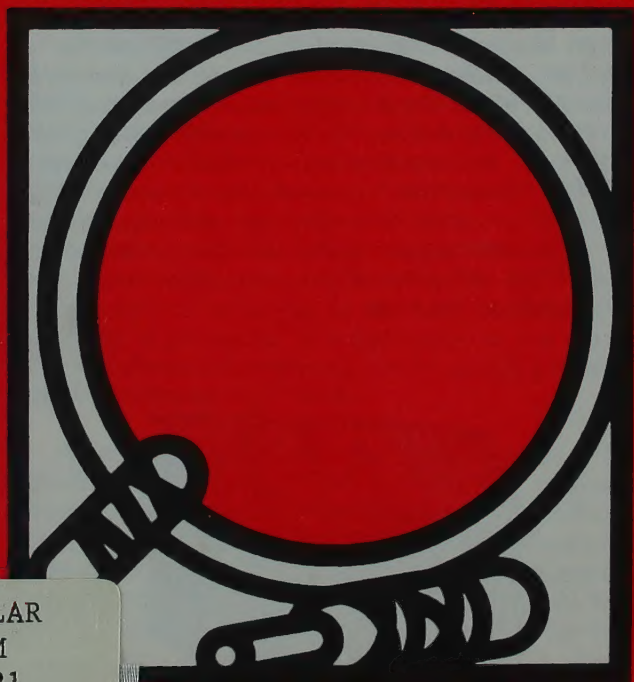


Fort Smith

NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES



POLAR
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FORMATION

POLARPAM

FORT SMITH

Fort Smith is an attractive town with a good atmosphere, in many ways it seems to have captured the best of two worlds. It is a modern town with many conveniences and commercial facilities, yet it is set in an unspoiled and beautiful environment. Its mild summer climate and long daylight hours make it a garden spot "North of 60°". The town is developing steadily along a well-planned path. It is clean and orderly, with well-kept homes lining paved streets. Residents find wilderness and beauty right at their back doors, and special "green belts" have been set aside to remain in their natural, undeveloped state.

The town is located 60° 00' North latitude, 111° 53' West longitude, which is 450 miles north of Edmonton, 450 miles south of the Arctic Circle, and within one mile of the Alberta/Northwest Territories border. The town is situated on the high sandy left bank of the Slave River. The area is generally flat, with good drainage and none of the bedrock and permafrost construction problems that plague other Northern communities. The climate is similar to that of the western prairies, and annual precipitation amounts to only 10 to 15 inches.

HISTORY

Early in the eighteenth century Slave or Slavey Indians occupied the Fort Smith area. Word of this Indian group reached traders at Fort York, far to the East across the Barren Lands, by the Cree Indians. The Crees boasted about how they had driven the others from the beaver-rich areas of the Athabasca, and contemptuously called them Slaves. (Another version has it that the Slaves received their name due to their peaceful, non-warring nature). The name has persisted, and fur traders named the Slave River and Great Slave Lake after these early inhabitants of the area.



Indian Spruce Bark Home in early Fort Smith.



First R.C. School in Fort Smith - 1915

Like other nomadic Indian groups of the Northern interior, the Slave Indians led a precarious life. Hunting conditions were often uncertain. They lived on a diet of moose and caribou, supplemented by other small game, and by fish if necessary. Moose hides, sinew, bones, horn, and wood provided the necessary materials for Slavey material culture.

William Stewart, who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company at York Fort, is believed to be the first white man to contact the Slave Indians. In 1715 he set out across the Barren Grounds on a trading mission, and south of Great Slave Lake he encountered a group of Slave Indians at their wintering ground.

There are four sets of rapids on the Slave River where it crosses the 60th parallel, which separates the Northwest Territories from the provinces. The rapids (north to south) are called Rapids of the Drowned, Mountain, Pelican, and Cassette Rapids. These rapids were the only serious obstacle in the 1600 mile water passage from Fort McMurray to the Arctic Ocean. Early explorers, traders and travellers navigated the Athabasca, Slave and MacKenzie Rivers forming this route, and they would travel on land for a distance to avoid the threatening rapids. After experimenting with various portages around the rapids, one sixteen mile pack trail emerged as the best solution to the problem of portaging. The entrances to the portage became favorite campsites, one of which eventually grew to become Fort Smith.

Like most other Northern communities, Fort Smith went through its phases of explorers, traders, missionaries, and government officials. One of the famous early explorers in this area was Samuel Hearne, who, just after his great overland journey to the Arctic, travelled up the Slave River in 1772 to further Hudson's Bay Company fur trade interests.

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Cuthbert Grant, another early explorer and trader, undertook a journey to Great Slave Lake in 1788. He decided to try shooting the rapids instead of portaging around them. He wanted to test the first link of the rapids himself before allowing others to risk it, so he arranged a signal--one shot would mean the rapids were navigable. Grant entered the rapids, and soon discovered that they were far too risky. He headed for shore, resolving to portage the other boats. But one of Grant's men, forgetting the pre-arranged signal, took a shot at a bird. The two boats upstream immediately headed for the rapids and tragedy. Both boats were overturned, and five men drowned. To this day the set of rapids farthest north bears the name "Rapids of the Drowned."

Other famous explorers to pass through the area were Peter Pond, in 1780; Alexander Mackenzie, in 1789; Sir John Franklin, several times between 1820 and 1826; and Lieutenant George Back, in 1833.

In 1874, the Hudson's Bay Company established a permanent trading post at a favourable site at the North end of the rapids. The post was named Fort Smith in honour of Donald Alexander Smith, later to become Lord Strathcona, who had worked with the Hudson's Bay Company since 1838. Later he became head of the Montreal Department and Resident Governor. In 1871, he was appointed Chief Commissioner for the Northwest, and in 1872 became a member of the first North-West Council.

In 1876 the Roman Catholic Mission which had been established at Salt River in the 1850's was transferred to Fort Smith.

By 1911, traffic over the portage was so heavy that 200 horses were needed to haul freight. In those early days, the trading posts were stocked with powder, shot, tea, tobacco, flour, sugar, and clothes. No currency was used, and ball shot and powder were the usual medium of exchange. When RCMP took an occasional 'prisoner,' he paid his fine by sawing firewood.

In the twentieth century, Fort Smith began to expand quite a bit. In 1914, a hospital was built and operated by the missions, and a mission school was built in 1915. 1921 saw the arrival of the first government administration building in Fort Smith. In 1922, Wood Buffalo National Park was established.

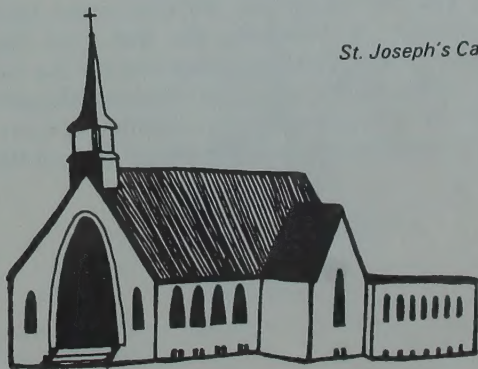
From 1912 to 1928, the R.C. Mission operated St. Bruno's Farm, twenty miles west of Fort Smith. This farm provided meat, milk, and butter for Fort Smith residents. However, other farms soon sprang up to fill the needs of Fort Smith, and the buffalo, attracted by farm feed, were becoming a nuisance, so St. Bruno's closed.

In 1929, an airport was built in Fort Smith, and at last the mail could be flown in. Prior to this time, mail had to be delivered by dog sled.

In 1934, gold was discovered in Yellowknife, and many prospectors came rushing through Fort Smith. In the same year an Anglican Mission House was built, and the Church was built, and the Church was added in 1936. In 1939, Fort Smith's first "public" school was built. The first teacher's salary was paid by donations and Bingo funds.

Because Fort Smith was such an important Northern centre for transportation and administration, it usually felt the effects of booms and lags in the economic cycle of the whole North. 1942 was one of the "boom" years, when the American Army arrived to begin work on the "Canol" project. Hundreds of barges full of supplies arrived, the portage was rebuilt, a new airfield was built, and for the first time winter roads linked Hay River and Fort Smith with Edmonton. In 1945, the rediscovery of gold at Yellowknife led to another boom period for Fort Smith.

In the decade following 1945, Fort Smith's population quintupled, mainly reflecting an increase in administrative facilities. For a time it seemed that Fort Smith would surely become the new capital of the Northwest Territories. When it was finally announced (in 1966) that Yellowknife was to be the capital, many people felt that Fort Smith's future was in jeopardy. To complicate the problem, the railway was extended to Hay River, making that town the important transportation center for the Mackenzie District. However, Fort Smith remained



St. Joseph's Cathedral



Northern Life Museum in Fort Smith, N.W.T.

firmly on its feet, and today is certainly in no danger of becoming a ghost town. Today more and more Fort Smith residents are investing in private homes.

In the 1950's more services were extended to Fort Smith. In 1956, the town received a telephone system, and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce opened a branch office in Fort Smith. In 1957, the 28-room Pinecrest Hotel was built, completed with beer parlour, cocktail lounge, and restaurant. In 1960, St. Joseph's Cathedral (R.C.) was completed.

Fort Smith officially became a "town" in 1966. In 1967 the modern arena was built as a Canadian Centennial Project. In 1968 tragedy struck Fort Smith — a landslide swept away many houses and took one life. The landslide site can still be seen along the left bank of the Slave River.

1970 was an eventful year for Fort Smith. The Queen visited the town for Centennial celebrations. As a Centennial project a beautiful modern library was built.

Fort Smith is continuing its growth. Various branches of the Federal and Territorial Governments continue to make Fort Smith their headquarters. And new buildings keep appearing — a new community hall and an ultra-modern Northern Museum are now under construction, and a new housing project is also underway.

ECONOMY

There is no major industry supporting the town of Fort Smith. It is a center for government administration and for education, so that most residents work directly or indirectly for the Civil Service. Fort Smith is Regional Headquarters for the Government of the N.W.T. and for Federal Government Departments responsible for wildlife, forestry, land use, communications and the Wood Buffalo National Park.

In addition there are 55 licensed businesses in Fort Smith which provide many kinds of supplies and services. Summer construction projects, fire-fighting, and winter work projects provide a good deal of casual work. Tourism potential is good.

TRANSPORTATION

Fort Smith has a 6000' by 200' paved airstrip, and a 7020' by 200' gravel and grass airstrip. The facilities can handle 727 jet. Pacific Western Airlines offers Jet Service from Edmonton five days a week. One-way fare is \$49. PWA also has scheduled flights to Fort Smith from Yellowknife, Inuvik, and Resolute. In addition, two local charter companies, Buffalo Airways and Gateway Aviation, make aircraft and helicopters available.

Fort Smith is accessible by all-weather highway connecting with the Mackenzie Highway System. Several trucking and transport companies serve the community, as well as a bus service and local taxis. Northern Transportation Company delivers freight from Waterways, Alberta, to wharves at Fort Fitzgerald, but the town's main resupply is by truck over the all-weather roads. The town itself has seven miles of paved road (a luxury in the North).

COMMUNICATIONS

Canadian National Telecommunications supplies the town with telephone and telex services. M.O.T. R.C.M.P., and Mackenzie Forest Service operate their own radios. There is daily mail service from Edmonton, Radio comes to Fort Smith through C.B.C.'s Mackenzie Network. C.B.C. also extends T.V. to the town.

Fort Smith was one of the first northern communities to receive C.B.C. color T.V. broadcasting via satellite. The "Pilot" is a local newspaper, and the town receives daily newspapers (two days late) from Edmonton.



"The Radium King"

One of the first boats to operate in the North now preserved as a museum piece in Fort Smith.

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Water is chlorinated and fluorinated, then piped to the town by a gravity feeding system. Water is delivered by truck to the homes without running water. Garbage is collected weekly, and sewage is piped from homes. Electricity is provided by N.C.P.C. from Twin Gorges Hydroelectric Plant on the Taltson River with a 36,000 kw capacity. The town has a Volunteer Fire Department with one engine and a water truck.

HEALTH SERVICES

Fort Smith's medical facilities include a 50-bed hospital and a Public Health Centre run by two nurses. The town has resident doctors, a dentist, and an ophthalmologist.

EDUCATION

Forth Smith's Elementary School teaches grades one through six with 32 teachers and an enrollment of 638 for 1972. The High School employs 20 teachers for grades seven to twelve and enrollment for 1972 is about 250 students.

Fort Smith also has a Hostel, a teachers' college, and an Adult Vocational Training Centre. The A.V.T.C. draw its students from all over the Northwest Territories. The courses offered vary in length and enrollment, and are continuously being conducted. Vocational courses offered include food services, business administration, nursing assistants, trades apprenticeship, telecommunications, and a unique new program in dental therapy. In addition, basic skill development and upgrading courses are offered. Presently A.V.T.C. residence facilities can accommodate up to 100 men and 40 women. Fort Smith is proud of its extensive educational facilities and hopes one day to hold a Northern University.



Anglican Church

STORES

Kaesar's - general store, fur trader; groceries, dry goods, some handicrafts.

The Bay - general store, fur trader

The Gift Box - small gift shop

Jacquelyne's - ladies apparel

Wally's Drugs - modern drug store.

In addition there is a barber shop, a beauty salon, 3 service stations, two air charter companies, local taxis, transport companies, and local contractors.

CHURCHES

Roman Catholic services are held in St. Joseph's Cathedral and in Thebacha Hall. The Anglican Church in Fort Smith is a quaint little building with a seating capacity of about 60 persons. The Church of the Nazarene is situated in a residential section of the town. In addition to these three churches, there is an active Baha'i community in Fort Smith.

RECREATION

Fort Smith's recreational facilities are outstanding. The town has an arena and curling rink, both with artificial ice, a nine-hole golf course, ski slope and cross-country ski trails, tennis court, riding ranch, fastball diamonds, swimming pool, pool hall, theatre, and lots of facilities for nearby picnicing and camping. In addition the school gyms are available for public use, and there are several active service clubs.

The town is right on the doorstep of Wood Buffalo National Park, one of the largest preserved wilderness areas in the world, complete with free-roaming buffalo herds. The Park is a special place for special people. There is no pampering here -- it is a place for explorers, a place to "get away from it all." There are many hundreds of miles of navigable water waiting to be discovered, and lots of wildlife and natural beauty waiting to be admired.

ODDS AND ENDS

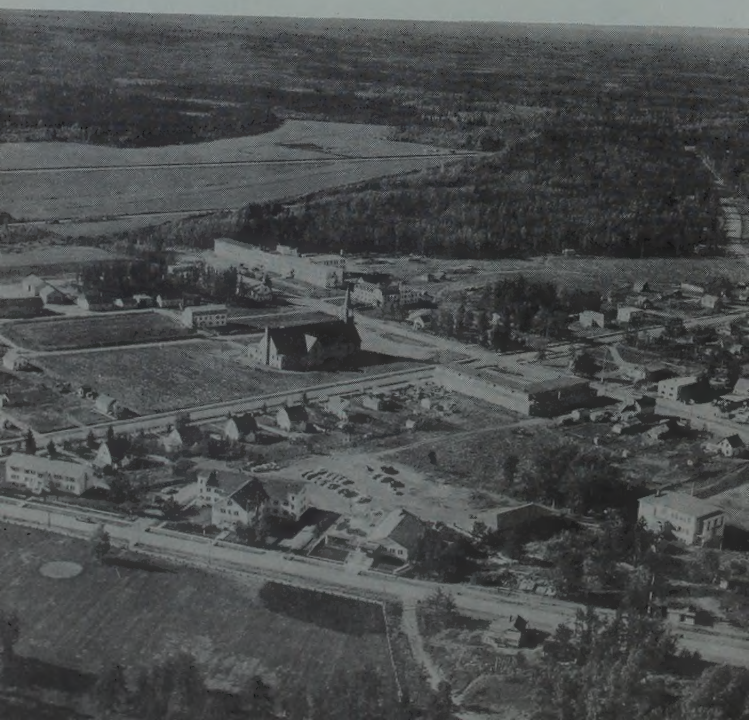
Fort Smith's population for 1972 is about 2500.

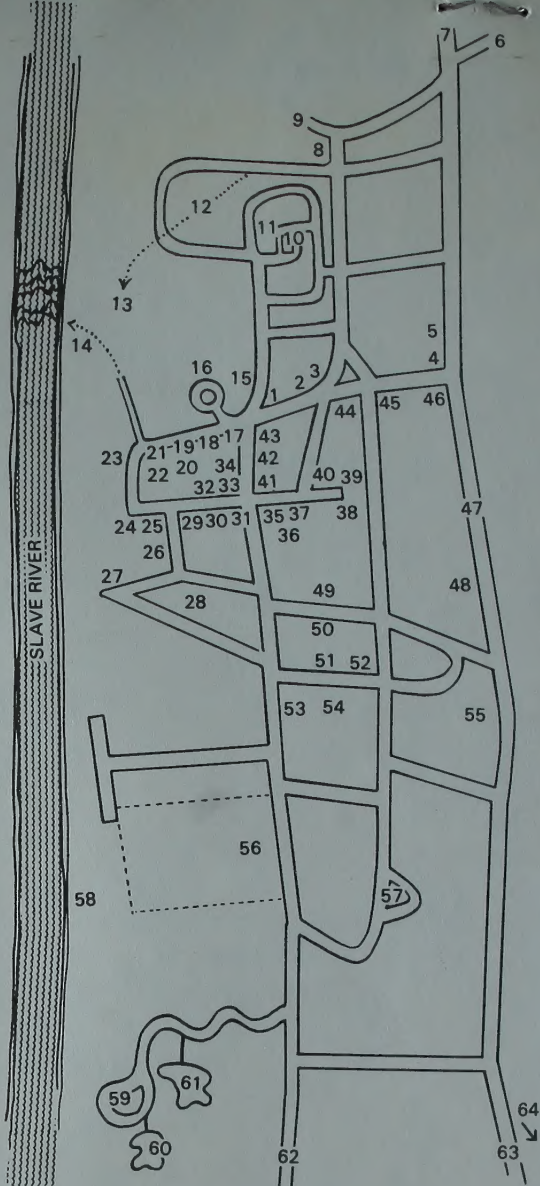
You might be interested in looking up some of the old-timers in Fort Smith and hearing about their early trapping experiences.

Liquor can be purchased at the Territorial Liquor Store in Fort Smith, as well as at licensed clubs, lounges, and dining facilities.

There is a Chinese Food Smorgasbord every Sunday from 5 p.m. until 9 p.m. in the Northern Gate Restaurant (in Pinecrest Hotel). Cost is \$2.75 per person.

There is an attractive tourist information booth in the centre of town.





FORT SMITH

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Tourist Information Centre | 33 Pinecrest Hotel complex (incl. Coffee Shop, lounge, restaurant) |
| 2 Theatre | 34 C. N. Telecommunications |
| 3 Simpson Sears (Mailorder) | 35 Wally's Drugs |
| 4 Gulf Station | 36 Centennial Library |
| 5 Electrical Plant | 37 Professional Building |
| 6 Road to: Sea Plane Base; Salt River; Pine Lake; Peace Point | 38 Hospital |
| 7 Road to: Mountain Portage; Fort Fitzgerald; Hay Camp | 39 Grotto |
| 8 Woodcutters' Monument | 40 R. C. Bishop of the Mackenzie |
| 9 Park; view of rapids; new ski slope site | 41 R. C. Cathedral |
| 10 Park; Receiving Home | 42 Northern Chicken (take-out); Crown Taxi |
| 11 Church of the Nazarene | 43 Pool Hall; Ophthalmologist |
| 12 Axehandle Hill Trail | 44 Ball Park |
| 13 Historic Site | 45 Esso Bulk Plant |
| 14 Slave River Rapids Trail | 46 Esso Station |
| 15 Anglican Church | 47 Mackenzie Highway |
| 16 R. C. M. P. Compound | 48 Little Buffalo Ranch (horse-back riding) |
| 17 Federal Govt. Building; Wood Buffalo Park Office | 49 Oblate House |
| 18 Territorial Govt. Building | 50 New Museum |
| 19 Liquor Store | 51 Grandin College |
| 20 Old primary school; Social Development Office | 52 N. W. T. Teachers' College |
| 21 Bank | 53 J. B. T. School |
| 22 Post Office | 54 Breynat Hall |
| 23 Hudson's Bay Store | 55 Adult Vocational Training Centre |
| 24 Esso Station | 56 Caravan Park; Minor League Ball |
| 25 Curling Rink | 57 Frontier Village |
| 26 Arena | 58 Landslide Site |
| 27 Thebatcha Hall | 59 Tourist Campgrounds |
| 28 New Community Hall | 60 Tourist Trailer Park |
| 29 Kaesar's Stores | 61 Tourist Trailer Park |
| 30 Canadian Legion | 62 To Airport, M. O. T. Weather Station |
| 31 Town Hall; Fire Dept | 63 To: Bel Rock, Thebatcha Campsite, Salt Plains, Farm, Little Buffalo Falls |
| 32 Barber Shop and Beauty Salon | 64 Rifle Range |



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES GENERAL INFORMATION

1,304,903 square miles, being 33.9 percent of the area of Canada.

Mainland area	730,266 square miles
Freshwater area	51,465 square miles
Offshore Islands area	523,172 square miles

Coastline length — approximately 9,500 miles.

Highway system — 841 miles.

Population — 1971 - 35,526: 1966 - 28,128

Business Volume 1970 — approximately \$215,000,000

Value of mineral production included above — \$124,000,000

designed
and printed by

Department
of Information
GOVERNMENT OF THE N.W.T.

